

Major General R. Steven Whitcomb
Commanding General
U.S. Army Armor Center



Training Changes Are Armor Conference Focus This Year

Over the past few years, we have tackled many critical topics for the Army during our annual Armor Conference. The Armor Conference has served as fertile ground for an annual crop of thoughts, questions, and solutions to the challenges that face soldiers across the operational spectrum. These important meetings have focused our collective energies and have helped us to lead the Army in areas such as technical innovation, doctrine development, force design, information empowerment, and battlefield effects integration. As we looked back at these past victories, we decided to channel this year's efforts on one of the most important topics in our Army: training.

Never has the need to focus on sharpening the Armor spearhead through realistic, demanding, and *appropriate* training been so necessary. Every unit in the mounted force can recite a litany of problems involving training management, scarcity of training resources, and measuring training effectiveness. Additionally, commanders and soldiers today find themselves facing an ever-increasing requirement for proficiency across a broad range of skill sets. The scout who serves in a legacy force unit today can find himself in an IBCT tomorrow and an Objective Force unit in the future. Additionally, the need for soldiers to participate in other neces-

sary missions — such as peacekeeping, homeland defense, recruiting, or instructing, with all the requisite skills — will not diminish. The ability to design, track, manage, provide, and resource training to the specificity needed today requires a “*system-of-systems approach*” that can only be described as the Objective Force. An Objective Force training system will have the robustness necessary to allow us to train effectively today, yet start producing soldiers with Objective Force skills and traits well before the fielding of the first Unit of Action. The Objective Force warrior will fight on legacy equipment and exploit its capabilities to the fullest potential. However, today's legacy warrior is not fully prepared to fight the Future Combat System. Given this assumption, the rapid transition to training that will produce Objective Force warriors makes sense and should take precedence over all of our other efforts.

For those who come to the Armor Conference, and for those who cannot, the concept of transforming our training systems to meet the demands of the Objective Force should dominate our discussions. I must admit that in true NTC fashion, “I don't know what I don't know” when it comes to establishing the system architecture and support that will enable this training system. We will need all of the intel-

lectual and technical abilities of the mounted force to solve these problems. However, what I can do is offer some insights into what I believe the Objective Force training system will look like and talk about some changes that will need to be made. Hopefully, my simple ideas will serve as a catalyst for better ideas from the force.

Life-long, Continuous Training

Training in the future cannot remain segmented into institutional blocks, operational blocks, and functional blocks. Today's “one-size-fits-all” training at the training base will have to be changed to allow training that is personally designed for the soldier and his future assignments. Institutional training will have to extend beyond the walls of the schoolhouse into the soldier's operational or functional assignment. Utilizing web-based, forward-based, or distance learning options, the school must reach forward to assist in this life-long learning process. The Army's schools and unit commanders must work together to seamlessly weave individual training into tailored packages that keep the soldier current, interested, and prepared while not becoming onerous in his work schedule or intrusive into family life. Training support, especially in the form of training support packages, must be available for every level of

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training from individual to brigade-level collective training. The linkage between schoolhouse and operational unit must allow for the rapid transmission of ideas and experiences from every level to the training developer. Preferably, this information will be available through the Internet and downloadable into a common use format.

Beyond Knowledge-based Training

We will have to move away from knowledge-based/knowledge-retention training and into experience-based training. Knowledge-based training is derived from reading books, sitting in a classroom, student discussion, or watching some form of presentation. Experiential learning comes from performing a task, under conditions as close to actual combat as possible, to standard, with enough repetition to master proficiency. How would you rather train a football team, have your players watch ESPN, or have them scrimmage an increasingly competent opposing team? We will still teach our players the playbook, but Objective Force training will be an intense scrimmage more often than the current 18-month rotation.

This requirement will drive us to develop entirely new training aids, devices, simulations, and simulators (TADSS) for our training. We must create conditions that accurately replicate the fear, confusion, and intensity found on the battlefield. Our simulations in constructive, virtual, and live settings need to be “emotional experiences.” Training platforms and systems must also come with their own embedded training capability. We don’t need another conduct of fire trainer. We need a platform that has conduct of fire training capability built right into the machine. Embedded training capability will ensure that commanders are never again separated from their ability to train, whether in garrison, in the field, or at war.

The requirement for combat realism will also drive us to insist on multi-echelon, multi-grade, combined arms

training at every position above initial entry. Resident schools, in particular, must be leadership- and battle command-centric. We must develop leaders in a battle school and allow them to gain experience in the execution of battle command. The old cavalry axiom of “never go somewhere you haven’t been before” has never rung more true. The first time a platoon leader gives a platoon order to a group of sergeants cannot be in his first unit — it must in the training base. Equally, the first time a company commander has to make a difficult decision during the intensity of combat must not be when our sons and daughters are in harm’s way.

Information Operations and Intent Training

These changes will produce leaders that are imbued with a warrior ethos right out of the training base. But a warrior ethos must be met with a change in mentality, and a change in culture. Future training will have to teach future leaders not *what* to think but *how* to think. Leaders must be trained to think in terms of information requirements right from the beginning. If information is the empowering element of combat power, then the importance of information exploitation must become the integral part of our mission planning process. This means developing the ability to articulate CCIR, PIR, and EEFI to subordinates while being able to quickly recognize and focus on fulfilling the information requirements from the higher echelon of command. This will generate the need for intent and information requirements rather than lengthy orders. Objective Force warriors honed by this type of training will have the confidence and adaptability to accept intent and information requirements and turn them into rapid and violent execution.

This intent-based training will replace our current process-based training. We will no longer grade students on their processes (“Well, your unit was annihilated, but your order checked all of the blocks...”), but rather their product (“You completed your mission by op-

erating effectively within commander’s intent...”). This kind of tactical understanding is reached through doing, not through seeing; through talking less and fighting more. Graduation must equal competence, not potential performance. Think about it: what would happen if the aviation school graduated an aviator with the proviso: “We’ve given him the tools necessary to fly and he has demonstrated his potential for flight worthiness — now he must go and prove himself to be a flyer?” While this sounds ludicrous, until recently the training base graduated lieutenants who had never led a platoon and captains who have never led a company attack. The training base continues to graduate majors who had never written, and then executed, a battalion order under battle-like conditions.

Conclusion

These are some, but not all, of my thoughts on Objective Force training. The Armor School is taking a proactive approach to Objective Force training. We have already started the move toward experience-based training by executing a new training methodology and by conducting multi-grade, multi-echelon training. We are not going to sit idly by; we are going to implement effective training whenever we find it. Clearly, we still have miles to go to develop the kind of training we need in order to produce the soldiers we will require for the Objective Force. This column is too short to list all of the things we must undertake to make our “transformational training” equal our “transformational effort.” My purpose is to get you, the Mounted Force soldiers, talking about these thoughts on future training. At the Armor Conference, we will examine some of these ideas, and look at many other things. For those of you who are coming, we look forward to seeing you and talking about the future of training. For those of you who can’t make it, we hope to hear your ideas and read about them in the pages of this magazine.

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